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New York

President:	Mr. Alemu	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Ilnystskyi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on situation in the Lake Chad Basin region (S/2017/764)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region (S/2017/764)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ms. Fatima Shehu Imam, Director of the Network of Civil Society Organizations in Borno state.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Ms. Imam, who is joining us via video teleconference from Maiduguri, Nigeria.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/764, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lake Chad basin region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: I thank you, Mr. President, and the members of the Security Council for this opportunity to brief the Council on the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/764) on the situation in the Lake Chad basin. Allow me to comment first on security and political developments.

Thanks to coordination among affected countries, we have witnessed encouraging progress in the fight against Boko Haram. The Secretary-General commends the Governments of the region for their efforts, including through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Without question, Boko Haram's combat capacity has diminished, but to compensate for that, Boko Haram has changed tactics by increasing the use of suicide attacks.

We thank the Government of Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their efforts to the release of an additional 82 girls kidnapped from Chibok in the north-eastern part of Nigeria in 2014. The recent visit to Nigeria by the Deputy Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women served to shed further light on the plight of women and girls in the Lake Chad basin. Unfortunately the fight is far from over. One hundred and thirty attacks attributed to Boko Haram in the four affected countries in June and July resulted in 284 civilian fatalities — a significant increase as compared to 146 attacks and 107 civilian fatalities in April and May. The most affected countries remained Nigeria, followed by Cameroon, the Niger and Chad.

In terms of political advocacy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and his Special Representative for Western Africa and the Sahel, respectively, regularly visit the affected countries to promote enhanced interregional cooperation. They propose a regional strategy to address the root causes of the crisis. Such a strategy should be owned and supported by the affected countries as well as the relevant subregional organizations, including the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

The Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region, held in February, and the visit by the Council in March brought needed attention to the long-neglected crisis in the Lake Chad basin. The United Nations and international partners are working to sustain the momentum generated by those events. Last week in Berlin, the United Nations participated in the first senior officials' meeting of the Oslo Consultative Group on Prevention and Stabilization in the Lake Chad Region. The meeting brought together representatives of the affected countries, donors and regional and subregional organizations. Discussions focused on addressing the structural causes of the crisis and included community stabilization, the restoration of services, local governance systems and the prevention of violence.

Turning to development challenges, I note that the Lake Chad basin crisis has wreaked havoc on basic infrastructure assets and Government services. Insecurity has sparked large-scale unemployment and left 1 million school-aged children deprived of education. The substantial economic impact of the crisis has reached nearly $9 billion across north-eastern Nigeria alone. Poverty, the low legitimacy of the State,

human insecurity and climate change, among other challenges, compound that dire situation. As is so often the case, women and the youth are key risk groups.

Conflict and displacement have eroded, and in some cases ruptured, the bonds between and within communities. Intra-communal structures and processes that traditionally regulated violence and resolved conflicts have weakened. We detect worrying signs of social fragmentation as tensions emerge from ethno-religious, social and other divisions, including between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. Unless robust peacebuilding efforts are introduced, the reintegration of ex-combatants, including from Boko Haram and vigilante groups, risk generating additional tensions and to heighten the risks of secondary conflict. Furthermore, the report notes the need for greater attention and funding to support development interventions, including community stabilization, economic revitalization and prevention, so as to build community resilience and ensure durable solutions.

Yesterday, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs concluded his first visit to the Niger and Nigeria to increase international visibility of the humanitarian situation, discuss with the Governments and consider practical steps to further strengthen the response.

Despite the significant progress made in reaching the affected people in the Lake Chad basin, the humanitarian needs in the region continue to be staggering. Approximately 10.7 million people require humanitarian assistance. With 8.5 million people in need, north-eastern Nigeria is again enduring the worst of the crisis. Funding continues to fall significantly short. At present, the regional appeal requesting $1.5 billion for 2017 is funded at only 40 per cent.

The region now faces the rainy season, when food insecurity is at its worst, with thousands of farmers having missed four planting seasons in a row owing to conflict, resulting insecurity and displacements. Across the region, 7.2 million people are severely food insecure, including 5.2 million in north-eastern Nigeria, where an estimated 50,000 people are at the highest risk of famine. The crisis has displaced an estimated 2.4 million people, including 1.5 million children. New displacements are occurring alongside the return of IDPs and refugees. Given the continued insecurity and lack of basic services in many affected areas, the involuntary and unsafe return of refugees and IDPs must be avoided at all costs.

Concerning human rights, we are deeply concerned about the continued violations by Boko Haram, including killings, the forceful use of children as suicide bombers and sexual and gender-based violence against women and children. Perpetrators must be brought to justice. The United Nations has also received numerous allegations of serious human rights violations committed in the context of counter-terrorism operations. The United Nations continues to advocate strongly with MNJTF to put forward a clear strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including by recruiting a dedicated gender adviser within its civilian component. The report notes our conviction that we must develop a common understanding that human rights violations are among the root causes of instability in the Lake Chad basin and that impunity will fuel the crisis. Investing in traditional justice mechanisms at the community level is essential to sustainable reconciliation and stability. The prevention of terrorist activities, stabilization and recovery initiatives must integrate the human rights dimension.

Sexual violence remains appallingly widespread in the region. It is a driver of forced displacement and a particular risk in displacement settings, in which conflict-affected women and children are exposed to daily risks of exploitation. Those suffering from acute physical or psychological trauma need urgent medical and psychosocial care. The United Nations is exploring options for the deployment of dedicated expertise on conflict-related sexual violence to north-eastern Nigeria.

The United Nations faces a serious funding shortage to deploy human rights monitors across the region. We reiterate our call on the international community to generously contribute funds to enable the United Nations to support the establishment of national and regional mechanisms for the systematic monitoring and reporting of the human rights situation.

Allow me to touch upon the issues of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The lack of a comprehensive approach in addressing Boko Haram defectors, including clear and transparent criteria that are human rights compliant and in line with the international terrorism framework, produces multiple challenges. Despite good faith, ad hoc efforts result in thousands of persons being irregularly

detained and/or unpredictably processed. This situation is not productive, sustainable or in accordance with the rule of law, and justice is not served.

In our view, the efforts of the MNJTF remain indispensable in resolving the crisis. However, the heavy financial investment borne by regional countries comes at a high cost: Governments have no choice but to divert much of their national budgets from development to addressing national and regional security. Within the United Nations, Member States are careful to make sure that we do not shift development and humanitarian funds to peace and security work. We would hope that the affected countries could attract the support to do the same. We welcome the pledges already made and encourage the further timely disbursement of contributions to enable the MNJTF to address the challenges it faces.

In conclusion, I note that the complex and increasingly protracted nature of the Lake Chad basin crisis calls for innovative and integrated solutions that bridge traditional divides between humanitarian and development strategies. The United Nations is committed to adopting a new way of working that will address the urgent needs of the affected populations and the root causes of the crisis in a coordinated and phased manner. I urge all partners to redouble their efforts to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance to the affected populations, as well as early and longer-term recovery. That is the basis to build resistance and assure durable solutions to the crisis.

Once again, we encourage the affected countries to jointly elaborate a regional strategy to address the root causes of the crisis. We hope that the planned regional conference on stabilization to be held in N'Djamena in October will be the first step towards the development of such a strategy.

We in the United Nations remain committed to working with regional countries on ending the violence, protecting civilians, promoting human development and alleviating the suffering in the Lake Chad basin. We can prevent this crisis from growing, but that would require greater political and financial support to the Lake basin region. The side event to be held on 21 September at the margins of the General Assembly session will be a key opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its support for the region.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Imam.

Ms. Imam: I would like to begin by thanking the Ethiopian Ambassador, and President of the Security Council for this month, for inviting me to provide a civil society perspective as part of the Council's deliberations on the Lake Chad basin region.

I am Fatima Shehu Imam, the current Chairperson of the International Federation of Women Lawyers in Borno state. Today I also represent the Network of Civil Society Organizations in Borno state.

The Network is a coalition of more than 100 civil society, community and faith-based organizations engaged in a wide range of activities geared towards providing humanitarian aid and assistance to victims of the over four-year-long insurgency. In Borno state, where I live and work, families, livelihoods and communities have been repeatedly torn apart by insurgent activities of the Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad, otherwise known as Boko Haram. Borno state remains the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency.

In March this year, Council members met with me and other women-led civil society organizations during the Security Council mission to Maiduguri. Sadly, there has been no significant improvement in providing for protection needs or humanitarian assistance to the growing number of victims of the insurgency who have been displaced.

The non-participation of women in decision-making, peacebuilding processes, and in aid and relief delivery in camps remains a serious concern. Borno state currently hosts the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDP), who remain in need of urgent humanitarian protection and assistance owing to the level of insecurity in the State. The dire humanitarian conditions in north-east Nigeria are arguably brought on by the security challenges and the almost near-total collapse of societal and institutional apparatus of the Government, which has been unable to keep up with the increasing numbers of internationally displaced persons.

I wish to highlight the following key concerns we have identified in the context of the work we do as humanitarians, enumerate the main areas for urgent intervention and touch on the challenges we face as a coalition. I will then conclude with an appeal to the conscience of the Security Council.

On security, the general situation in and around Maiduguri remains tense and fragile. While there have been several reports forecasting improvements and gains by the Nigerian armed forces in the region, that progress has been grossly overestimated. That has left room for a false sense of security, which has also led to a resurgence of armed attacks on civilians and other soft targets in and around the state. People still live in fear in their communities, and many who have been displaced as a result of the insurgency are reluctant to return. That has resulted in poverty, a lack of food, malnutrition and a total collapse of economic activities within the region and the threat of famine.

Threats to the life and property of marginalized populations, especially women and girls, seem to be on the increase in the light of the resurgence of violent attacks. Local civil society organizations working on the ground, such as mine, are largely incapacitated in reaching out to large sections of those communities, including to women and girls who are in urgent need of humanitarian aid. Unlike international non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, which are accompanied by security details during field operations, local groups are continuing to carry out their work unaccompanied by any form of security apparatus, thereby making access a major challenge and compromising the lives of individuals who engage in such operations.

There is continuing and clear abuse of the rights of individuals living in the camps in Maiduguri and surrounding areas. As have been detailed in numerous reports to the Council, there are severe shortages of food and other supplies. That has led to a situation where ther is a trade in sexual favours for food. From the various visits I have personally made to the IDP camps as part of my mandate to improve and promote the welfare and rights of women and children, it is pertinent to note that most of the women and girls in the IDP camps are ignorant of their basic human rights and, as such, do not even know when their rights are being violated. That is partly a result of culturally induced factors where women do not have a voice and, in a few cases, do not know where to go when violated. The insurgency has taken its toll on those women who are now heads of households and are compelled to give their bodies for food — which ultimately results in unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases — in the name of survival sex just to be able to provide for their family.

With regard to the women and girls who have been abducted by Boko Haram, women and girls have been used as targets in the recent trend of violent attacks perpetrated by insurgents in utilizing them as suicide bombers. The issue of stigmatization faced by those women and girls cannot be overemphasized. A case at hand is that of a married woman who was abducted by Boko Haram and returned after a few years with another child. Her husband is forcing her to choose between him and the child. The psychological trauma faced by that woman, and the many others who have lost their self-esteem as a result of stigmatization, needs to be urgently addressed. A sharper focus must be placed on women's reintegration, while tackling stigmatization and ensuring that they are part of the strategies aimed at addressing Boko Haram.

In terms of the threat to farming, the fragile state of security in the region has led to a situation where the normal lifestyles and customs of the population have been truncated. Due to inherent security challenges, members of some communities are afraid to go to their farms because it is risky to travel beyond a three-kilometre radius from their communities. About a week ago, 12 people were abducted from their farms and are yet to be found. Reports of such abductions are numerous, which is of course of great concern to my Network.

The Network faces myriad challenges, as do many civil society groups, that affect our ability to deliver the lifesaving work we are trying to carry out. Those challenges cover, but are not limited to, operations, such as funding, institutions, policy and law and security.

There currently appears to be more rigidity than flexibility in the level of donor funding available for humanitarian assistance, thereby creating a situation whereby highly professional and experienced institutions, such as United Nations agencies and international NGOs, are expected to access funding based on the same evaluation criteria. Those quite clear and noticeable differences in terms of institutional capacity undoubtedly impedes the availability of funding opportunities available to smaller local groups in the field that carry out lifesaving interventions.

There is an urgent need to ensure that local civil society organizations and affected populations are critical components in the design and implementation of interventions. The fragile and tense situation still makes it extremely challenging and risky for local

groups to engage in operations in the field. As a result, those groups lack the accompanying security apparatus available to United Nations agencies and NGO colleagues.

Despite the extreme humanitarian situation in the country and the apparent global focus on Nigeria arising from the insurgency and the increasing number of people who have been displaced and are in need of protection and assistance, it might interest the Council to note that the country still lacks any comprehensive legislation and/or policy that holistically targets humanitarian responses. The result is that most of work currently being carried out is non-transparent and ad hoc, with no accountability mechanism.

In conclusion, while I am immensely grateful for the apportunity afforded to me to address the Security Council, I must reiterate the important role that perception plays in the context of humanitarian intervention and bringing hope. The perception on the ground today reflects the diminishing hope of the huge population affected by the conflict, as they believe responses to be insufficient, despite the huge funding allocation reported by the Government and development partners. I urge the Council to see this as an urgent and dire call — given the highlighted challenges and analysis of the situation, it should galvanize a strategic and adequate response mechanism to bring assistance and aid to the millions of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance.

The President: I thank Ms. Imam for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his valuable briefing and Ms. Imam for sharing her thoughts.

It was six months ago, in a dusty internally displaced person's camp in Maiduguri, that we heard Ms. Imam's testimony, together with those of many others. It really brought home to me, and probably to several of us who were there, the human cost of the crisis in the Lake Chad basin. It was therefore very good to hear from Ms. Imam again today. It is vital that the Security Council continue to hear from those most affected by the issues on our agenda and continue to use those analyses and from-the-heart interventions to inform our decision-making.

Sadly, as both Ms. Imam and the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/764) make clear, six months on from our visit to the Lake Chad basin, the situation remains deeply troubling. Boko Haram has indeed been degraded and territory has indeed been reclaimed, but Boko Haram is far from a spent force. It is down but not out, shifting its tactics from land grabs to opportunistic attacks. Maiduguri now faces weekly suicide attacks, many from girls who are forced into suicide bombing. Over 400 people have been killed since we visited. Boko Haram's shameful and sickening abductions of young women and girls continue unabated. Those who return continue to face stigma and discrimination, which is why the United Kingdom will host a ministerial event here on 18 September, in order to launch a new set of global principles to tackle such stigma.

The continuing barbarity is only exacerbating the humanitarian crises. Since we visited, the number of Nigerians seeking refuge in neighbouring countries has only marginally decreased, with nearly 2 million people still displaced in north-east Nigeria and over 8 million in need of urgent, lifesaving assistance. While the number of forced returns has fallen, we have seen thousands of people pressured back into areas where they do not feel safe. It is therefore clear that we should all redouble our efforts to implement the commitments that we made in resolution 2349 (2017).

The United Kingdom will play its part. We remain committed to partnering with Nigeria and its neighbours to degrade and defeat Boko Haram. We remain committed to helping people in need in the region, having scaled up our humanitarian support to $130 million this year. We have announced an additional $260 million over the next four years, as part of the north-east Nigeria transition to development programme.

We all need to play our part. The Nigeria Humanitarian Fund was launched in February with an appeal for $1 billion this year. As of last month, that appeal is less than half funded. As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, insufficient funding from the donor community continues to limit the provision of food aid, development and recovery activities.

Just as the international community must act, so too should Governments in the region. We look to the Government of Nigeria and affected countries to provide greater resources where they can and to further prioritize the humanitarian response. We also call on them to expedite all remaining registrations

for humanitarian organization in the region, as the Secretary-General's report notes.

We welcome the increased civil-military coordination in the humanitarian effort and urge that to continue. However, we deeply regret the raid on the United Nations red roof compound by the Nigerian military last month. Nevertheless, we do welcome the swift response by the authorities.

It is clear that a long-term solution will be found only by addressing the root causes that led to Boko Haram's emergence, which I think was the main lesson for many of us on our visit. That search for longer-term solutions and root causes requires a regional plan to address the political, economic, governance, transparency and accountability issues. If such an effort is to succeed, it must respect human rights. The ongoing reports of torture, arbitrary arrests and sexual exploitation are deeply concerning and must stop. We therefore support calls for greater funding to strengthen the United Nations monitoring presence on the ground.

Finally, the role of women in the crisis cannot be overlooked. We reiterate the Council's call for greater engagement between regional Governments, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and women's civil society, as well as the deployment of a gender adviser to the MNJTF.

In short, there is a lot more that all of us need to do. Six months on from our visit we cannot afford to lose focus. I hope that through briefings like the one we heard today from Ms. Imam and Mr. Feltman we will all be reminded of what is at stake, just as we were in Maiduguri.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing. I would also like to thank Ms. Imam for sharing her important perspective with the Security Council. I agree that, in all of our work, we must endeavour to listen to the voices of those who are most affected. I did not have the opportunity to join the Council during its visit, so I am even more appreciative of Ms. Imam's very honest description, even in cases where she pointed to harshness and insufficiencies.

The challenges that face the Lake Chad basin region are multidimensional — a security crisis, a humanitarian emergency and development deficits. During its visit earlier this year, the Council had an opportunity to see how the interplay between those elements affects the lives of people in the region. Resolution 2349 (2017), adopted on our return, and to which today's briefing responds, was forward-looking and underlined our solidarity with, and full support of, the conflict-affected populations and the Governments in the region.

We commend the subregional, regional and international efforts being undertaken to mitigate the consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency. At the same time, we continue to be deeply concerned about the alarming scale of the humanitarian crisis. Despite progress in expanding the humanitarian response, it is clear that we still need to step up our efforts, while building on commitments made at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference in February. We must not let our attention to the situation wane. I would like to raise three points that we believe are critical to successfully responding to the challenges.

First, a holistic and regional approach is necessary. There are many root causes of instability and insecurity in the region, including climate change, economic fragility, marginalization, human rights violations and demographic challenges. Responding to the immediate security challenges must go hand in hand with development efforts that seek to address long-term instability by improving the daily lives of people on the ground.

We welcome the plans announced by the African Union Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to hold a stabilization conference in early October. That meeting will present an important opportunity for countries to work together on the development of a regional strategy to address the root causes.

The effects of climate change and its links to stability and security are evident. We cannot hide from that reality if we want to truly address the challenges in the region. The lack of follow-up in this area in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/764) serves once again to underline the need for improved risk assessment and risk-management strategies by the United Nations, as clearly highlighted by the Security Council in resolution 2349 (2017). The Council must remain alert to the threats to stability as a result of the adverse effects of climate change.

There is an inherent link between security, development and human rights. We agree with the Secretary-General's assertion that funding for United

Nations human rights monitoring tasks must be safeguarded. Nigeria's establishment of a judicial commission to review the compliance of its armed forces with human rights obligations and rules of engagement is a welcome development, and we call on all parties concerned to implement the Abuja Action Statement. We also encourage the swift deployment of the remaining civilian personnel to the Multinational Joint Task Force, not least adequate gender expertise.

The second point I would like to make is on the need for broad partnerships, particularly with the African Union (AU) and development actors. As shown by our visit to Addis Ababa last week, the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council are united in our analysis of the situation and the required responses. In order to operationalize those responses, we should seize the momentum created through the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.

Similarly, no sustainable peace can be achieved without effective partnerships spanning the humanitarian, reconstruction and development nexus. The Berlin meeting earlier this month underlined the need for early recovery, prevention and joint stabilization efforts. Complementarity and cooperation must be sought with a number of actors, including the International Financial Institutions (IFI).

My third point is on the role of women as agents of change. Women's empowerment cannot be overlooked in reconstruction and stabilization efforts. With the full, equal and effective participation of women at all levels of society, policies will be better adapted to realities on the ground, thereby creating better conditions for long-term stability and peace. I am particularly pleased that we have benefited from Ms. Imam joining us here today. Women from civil society can provide unique insights to underpin our discussions and decisions.

We are appalled by the finding in the Secretary-General's report that Boko Haram is increasingly resorting to suicide attacks, often carried out by forcibly recruited girls. That is why a key priority of Governments must be rehabilitation opportunities for children and their mothers, including the sensitization of communities to avoid stigmatization and to facilitate return. We also support the Secretary-General's call for the development of a strategy to engage women in the prevention of violent extremism, while taking into account the complexity of the categories that women fall into.

The adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) was an important acknowledgement of the many challenges facing the Lake Chad basin region and of the Council's commitment to supporting efforts towards long term and sustainable peace and development. We must not lose focus. We see three opportunities going forward.

First, we would welcome further information on the planning for the joint visit by the leaders of the United Nations, the AU and the IFIs, as requested in the resolution. Secondly, we would be interested in hearing from the United Nations system how the Security Council can best support the AU-Lake Chad Basin Commission stabilization conference. Finally, we look forward to the Secretary-General's report in October in response to the presidential statement on the risk of famine in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-east Nigeria (S/PRST/2017/14). This briefing will help add to our understanding of, and response to, the challenges being faced in the region and beyond.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): First, let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also thank Under Secretary-General Feltman for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council this afternoon. Of course, I would also like to thank Ms. Fatima Shehu Imam for her insightful perspective. Just like Mr. Rycroft, I have fond memories of the meeting with her and her colleagues on a very hot, dusty morning in the internally displaced persons camp in Maiduguri. That was an important visit by the Security Council — its first in many years to a region that has been affected by a crisis for many years. But the news that we receive weekly, if not daily, from Maiduguri shows that the crisis is far from ending, and we therefore need to maintain our focus on the region.

In that regard, over the past several months the Council has devoted considerable attention to the Lake Chad basin region and, as proof of that, the situation was most recently discussed during the annual United Nations-African Union joint consultative meeting. The crisis involving the Lake Chad basin and the territory of four countries is one of the world's largest humanitarian emergencies, with several million people in need of assistance. During our visit to the region, we became directly aware of just how urgently we need to act to strengthen our response in confronting the challenges in the region. While catalysed by the

Boko Haram insurgency, the crisis is multidimensional. Its root causes include climate change, poverty and underdevelopment — issues that people in the region have been tackling for many years, if not decades.

As the international community came together in Oslo to provide the humanitarian relief that was desperately needed, it is essential that the underlying causes of vulnerability in the Lake Chad basin region also be urgently addressed, lest dependence upon external assistance will be prolonged for many years to come. As a result of the commitments made at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference, Italy continues to contribute bilaterally through United Nations agencies, by funding projects aimed at promoting and strengthening the resilience of the local population while reducing the risk of internal displacement and migration.

While the Niger remains among the priority countries of our cooperation, we are about to launch a programme that will extend our priority on a regional basis. The project will have a longer duration, with the specific aim of sustaining youth using a wide range of tools — cash for work, microloans and on-the-job training. I would also like to mention Italy's commitment to sustaining a national development programme, recently presented in Paris by the President of Chad, Idriss Déby Itno, with a financial contribution of between €20 to €30 million. Furthermore, in the framework of the Secretary-General's famine response strategy in the Lake Chad basin region, we have already disbursed our financial pledge.

As highlighted comprehensively in the report by the United Nations Development Programme launched last week, a lack of resources, marginalization and weak governance are the primary forces driving young Africans to violent extremism. The situation in the Lake Chad basin region serves as a powerful reminder of the relationship between climate change, insecurity, population growth, unmet humanitarian needs and the risk of radicalization. A crisis of this magnitude affects all of us, because it forces the mass displacement of people and fosters conditions for illicit activities such as human trafficking and smuggling. It also underlines our responsibility in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was also created to prevent and mitigate the impact of these kinds of emergencies.

In that context, respect for human rights must be guaranteed by any means. Abuse against women or children or carrying out attacks against schools or hospitals cannot be tolerated wherever, whenever or by whomsoever it is committed. In that regard, we would like to reiterate the fundamental role of women in preventing potential conflicts and strengthening the process of national conciliation by ensuring a gender-inclusive perspective on issues of security, justice and governance. We commend the United Nations and the African Union for having devoted to a country of the Lake Chad region the first-ever joint high-level mission focused on womens' meaningul participation in peace, security and development. We support a regional, integrated and comprehensive approach to effectively address the security, economic, social and judicial dimensions of the crisis. We welcome the announcement of the October conference to be held in N'Djamena.

We also commend the initiatives taken by the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The dimensions of this crisis are broad, interregional and interconnected with instability in the Sahel. The terrorist threat and the scourge of trafficking in persons, drugs and arms are spreading across the whole region. I would like to commend the efforts carried out by the countries of the region to provide stability and security, as in the case of the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

I would also like to recall the important role played by the European Union (EU), one of the key partners of the region. The multidimensional action of the EU encompasses security, political and development cooperation and is based on an integrated paradigm of policies that consider the Lake Chad region and the Sahel as a whole geographical continuum. At the regional level, we strongly support the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, as well as initiatives such as the G-5 Sahel force and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development peace and security strategy. These are important steps towards a more proactive role for regional organizations and charting a path towards peace, security and development.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation welcomes the holding of this Security Council meeting on the situation in the Chad Lake basin, exactly six months after our visit to the region and following the adoption of the resolution 2349 (2017), which was devoted to this topic. My delegation would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General

Jeffrey Feltman for providing clarity in his presentation on the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/764), which informs us of progress made and challenges yet to be met. We would also like to convey our gratitude to Ms. Fatima Shehu Imam, Director of the Network of Civil Society Organizations in Borno state, for having so kindly shared with us her experience in the field.

In adopting resolution 2349 (2017) following our visit to Cameroon, the Niger, Nigeria and Chad, the Security Council again focused on the humanitarian and security crisis raging in the Lake Chad basin as a key priority of the international community. Following the visit, international mobilization in support of the region has considerably increased with the successive visits by representatives of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and by staff of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa. Along the same lines, a regional conference will be held in N'Djamena from 3 to 5 October on the issue of stabilizing the region. It will be the first meeting of a set of three aimed at determining a regional strategy to stabilize affected regions. I am sure that such international mobilization has contributed to the retaking of territory by the Joint Multinational Task Force, and I pay tribute to the courage and devotion of its contingents. The retaking of areas formerly controlled by Boko Haram has led to an improvement in the security situation in those areas, the freeing of hostages and, of course, the surrender or arrest of many of the group's combatants. On the humanitarian level, we should note the growing access of the civilian population to health care, sanitation and food.

However, as important as it is, all of that progress should not mask the difficult situation experienced by millions of women and children in the Lake Chad Basin region — as seen in the growing number of terrorist attacks in the past few months. Once again, on behalf of my country, I condemn those attacks in the firmest possible terms.

According to the Secretary-General's report, 245 attacks were carried out, most of those by female suicide bombers, during the months of June, July and August — in the north-east of Nigeria, in the north of Cameroon and in the Chad border regions, resulting in 225 casualties. While those attacks clearly bear witness to the ability of Boko Haram to continue its terrorist activities, the fact that the group is now increasingly resorting to asymmetrical tactics is undeniable proof that it is now in an unfavourable position. Nevertheless, we continue to deplore the lack of logistical resources available to the countries in the region in their fight against those asymmetric threats. All of that clearly shows the pressing need to bolster the capabilities of the States of the region in terms of early warning and rapid response sytems when faced with suicide attacks. That requires the involvement of the population to develop a community police force.

Similarly, regional and subregional cooperation remains crucial to securing borders in order to effectively combat trans-national organized crime, such as arms-smuggling and human trafficking, which, we must remember, are at heart of the crisis. There is also a need to step-up international support to meet the needs set out in the humanitarian appeal launched by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs which calls for the mobilization of $1.5 billion — of which, unfortunately, to date has been funded only the level of 30.9 per cent.

We should not make any mistake about it: development must be part of the solution, especially since poverty is most rife in the areas severely impacted by Boko Haram in the four countries concerned. That is why my delegation welcomes the meeting of the Oslo contact group — made up of Germany, Nigeria, Norway, Cameroon and Chad — scheduled for 6 September on the issues of prevention and stabilizing the region, which aims to identify ways to tackle the deep-rooted causes of the crisis.

In that regard, in order to make it possible for the countries concerned to effectively take the steps needed on the security and humanitarian fronts in order to meet the most difficult challenge — stabilizing the region and ensuring development — Senegal believes that the following important areas merit particular attention.

First, there is a need to foster private investment, which is essential to creating jobs, especially for young people, who remain the primary target of terrorist recruiters. We must also promote private investment so as to reduce the heightened dependence of the region's population on agriculture, livestock rearing and fishing.

Secondly, there is also a need for particular attention to addressing environmental challenges, for example, the drying up of Lake Chad, which, as we all know, has a very negative effect on agriculture in the region.

Thirdly, it is important to bear in mind the need to empower women both in the economic and political fields, with a view to reducing their vulnterability and augmenting their contribution to development.

Lastly, reducing the high level of dependence of the affected countries on oil and other mineral resources remains a priority. This step is necessary to avoid adverse budgetary consequences as a result of the drop in oil prices.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the urgent need to bolster the coordination of local, national, regional and international efforts in order to ensure the effectiveness of our collective action against Boko Haram. I pledge the full support of Senegal in that endeavour — one of the most important for the continent.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Ms. Fatima Shehu Imam for their briefings.

We welcome the holding of this meeting, which once again allows us to exclusively address the situation in the Lake Chad basin. It undoubtedly gives greater visibility to a grave crisis with relatively little media coverage. The multidimensional character of the Lake Chad basin crisis forces us to address all of its causes simultaneously, jointly and in an interconnected manner. The security, humanitarian and human rights situations, as well as the effects of climate change and socioeconomic stagnation in the region, call for comprehensive attention if we are to responsibly tackle the crisis. We commend the efforts of the Lake Chad basin countries to address these challenges even with limited capabilities and resources. In that regard, we acknowledge the important role of international partners and United Nations agencies that promote the mobilization of regional resources.

The security efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the fight against Boko Haram, which have made important progress, are laudable. They serve as a clear example that coordinated regional efforts are crucial in crises of this nature, where those who undermine stability know no borders or countries and, worse still, violate the fundamental human rights of whole communities — particularly women, girls and children. Similarly, the creation of the Group of Five for the Sahel joint force will also provide a significant boost to regional efforts in the fight against terrorism.

However, there is concern about the repeated allegations of human rights violations committed by the Task Force and the security forces of the Lake Chad basin countries. In that regard, Uruguay urges that all security activities, including those in the fight against terrorism, be carried out in strict compliance with the standards of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and calls for all due process guarantees to be provided to the alleged victims of such violations.

The situation of women in the Lake Chad basin merits particular attention given their vulnerability, mainly due to Boko Haram's actions. We note with great concern the systematic use of sexual violence as a terrorist tactic, as evidenced by the abduction and sexual abuse of thousands of women and girls at the hands of that terrorist group, as well as the increasing use of female suicide bombers, infamously known as women bombers or girl bombers.

On the other hand, very little information is available regarding the impact of gender in a complex humanitarian crisis, nor regarding the role that women's participation and leadership and gender equality considerations play in peace efforts, such as the struggle against violent extremism, the restoration of State authority and the protection of human rights. In that regard, my delegation identifies several key areas that require special attention, such as assistance in addressing the stigma of victims of sexual violence and their children; the provision of sexual and reproductive health services and education in the field; and ensuring that national and regional strategies recognize survivors of sexual violence as victims of terrorism so that they can benefit from comprehensive and adequate assistance.

The Lake Chad basin has for many years witnessed a multifaceted and structural crisis, which must be addressed by identifying activities that not only mitigate the terrorist threat and provide food to the needy population, but also promote long-term stability. That message was clearly transmitted to Heads of State, ministers and senior officials during the mission of the Security Council in the Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria in March.

It is therefore crucial and imperative that the Governments of the four countries impiement public policies that prioritize the allocation of resources to address the structural causes of the crisis and promote activities aimed at improving health services, education,

job creation and the resilience of communities with a view to improving their ability to adapt and respond to such disastrous developments.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am delighted, at the outset, to thank the Under-Secretary-General for the briefing pursuant to resolution 2349 (2017). I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/764) and Ms. Imam for her briefing.

The Lake Chad basin region has witnessed genuine progress in the fight against terrorist group Boko Haram. First of all, many regions have been recovered by Nigerian so Boko Haram no longer has such a strong hold over so much territory, and many members of Boko Haram have also been arrested. We commend the efforts of the States of the region to overcome their challenges despite their lack of resources. They are clearly taking this multidimensional crisis seriously, and we are seeing greater cooperation among them. Significant national efforts have also been made, particularly in the legal sphere, where there is greater cooperation and where measures are being taken to respect human rights, to allow refugees to return to their homes and to free many young women kidnapped by Boko Haram.

The States of the region are today a model to be emulated. Indeed, the humanitarian crisis is being managed diligently and humanitarian aid has reached the affected regions rather seamlessly. Additionally, significant financial contributions have been made to the region, primarily to benefit refugees. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the humanitarian crisis in north-eastern Nigeria, where 5.2 million people are affected by a humanitarian crisis that today is looking very much like a famine. That is why we call on donors to honour the commitments they undertook in Oslo early this year to avoid a full-blown humanitarian disaster. We call on the various international and regional humanitarian organizations to redouble their efforts to address and combat the crisis. We are also deeply grateful to the Secretary-General, who has spared no effort to raise early awareness of the signs of this crisis this year and to mobilize the funding needed to address it.

We strongly condemn any act that violates human rights, including barbaric actions by Boko Haram against the civilian population of the States in the Lake Chad region, and especially violations against women and girls, and the devastation wrought on schools, hospitals and Nigeria's medical and educational infrastructure in general. We demand that all the perpetrators and their supporters be brought to justice and that they do not enjoy impunity.

In that context, we would like to note that, despite the achievements by the Multinational Joint Task Force in combating Boko Haram, the Force still needs more support from the international community in restoring stability in the Lake Chad region. We urge all the international and regional partners concerned to provide more support to the Task Force at every level, including equipment, training, logistics and capacity-building. We call on international partners to make good on the commitments they announced at the donor conference held in Addis Ababa on 1 February 2016 with regard to launching an African fund to support the Multinational Joint Task Force.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary General Jeffrey Feltman and Ms. Fatima Shehu Imam, Director of the Network of Civil Society Organizations in Borno state, for their briefings.

France is encouraged by the recent progress that has been made in the fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin region. We commend the joint efforts of the countries of the region in that regard and the central role that the Multinational Joint Task Force has played. However, the terrorist threat continues to weigh on the countries and peoples of the region, as the tragic record of the many recent attacks shows. We firmly condemn the serious human rights violations that are being committed against children. Children are killed and mutilated every day; they are victims of sexual violence or of attacks on schools and hospitals; they are recruited as child soldiers. The growing use of children in suicide attacks and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war are disgusting and a source of concern and indignation that should haunt our consciences.

The countries of the region continue to mobilize in response to the terrorists' violence, with the support of the international community. It is the Security Council's responsibility to provide support to the African States that have been uniting at the regional level to fight terrorism. France is playing a full part in that effort through the logistical and intelligence support that Operation Barkhane is giving the Multinational Joint Task Force. We have also been providing bilateral support to the armies of the region against Boko Haram, totalling more than €30 million since 2015, and we expect the rest of the international community

to take part in that effort as well. The countries of the region, quite rightly, have major expectations for United Nations involvement, as we saw last week in the Council's recent consultations with the African Union Peace and Security Council, and we must not disappoint them.

That international support for the efforts of the countries of the region goes hand in hand with certain responsibilities. In particular, the fight against terrorism must not admit violations of human rights of any kind. We therefore expect the countries of the Multinational Joint Task Force to act in full respect for the relevant provisions of international law. The measures that have already been taken to deal with this issue are steps in the right direction. Lastly, we deplore the delay in disbursing the €31 million in funds that the European Union allocated to the African Union a year ago. It should be used to equip the regional force that, owing to inadequate equipment, has been unable to effectively pursue the Boko Haram fighters who have taken refuge on the islands of Lake Chad during the current rainy season.

The response to the crisis in the Lake Chad basin region is not just a security matter. If we are to achieve a lasting solution to it, we must pay close attention to the humanitarian and development challenges and to the protection of civilians. The first point to make is that the gravity of the continuing humanitarian emergency in the region must compel us to strengthen our efforts to support the countries that are on the front lines in the fight against terrorism and that are hosting a considerable number of refugees. Given the size of the needs to be met, it is crucial to ensure a comprehensive approach and improve coordination between donors. If United Nations action is to be truly effective, it can come only in the form of support to the efforts of the countries of the region. In that regard, the tripartite mechanism established between Cameroon, Nigeria and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is an important step forward that we should welcome.

It is also essential that all the countries concerned ensure that United Nations and humanitarian personnel have unhindered, safe access wherever people are in need of emergency assistance. Lastly, we are particularly worried about the risk of famine, particularly in north-eastern Nigeria, where more than 5.2 million people, including 450,000 children, are suffering from severe food insecurity. This situation, which is the result of the insecurity produced by Boko Haram, is not inevitable and should compel us to take action, which is why France took the initiative of convening an Arria-formula meeting on the issue in June, and why the Council has asked the Secretary-General for a specific briefing on it in October, under France's presidency of the Council.

The second point I have to make is that the fight against terrorism must go hand in hand with a tireless effort to promote the protection of civilians. That includes ensuring the continued security of populations dealing with Boko Haram and supporting the voluntary and lasting return of displaced persons and refugees where security conditions permit. We also have to come up with concrete, immediate answers to the issue of women who are refugees or displaced, about which they should be fully consulted.

My third and last point is that, in grappling with the multifaceted security, humanitarian and economic crisis in this region, the only possible approach is one that engages with the virtuous circle of development. If we are to succeed, we must tackle the security, humanitarian and development challenges head on and in a complementary way. It would be an illusion to imagine that we can defeat terrorism without eradicating extreme poverty and malnutrition or improving education and employment for young people. That is why France has maintained its financial effort by contributing €14.5 million in humanitarian aid in 2017 and implementing a Lake Chad initiative for the empowerment of refugees and displaced populations amounting to a commitment of €36 million.

Conversely, it will not be possible to give development genuine momentum if we do not defeat Boko Haram. We encourage the States of the region and the Multinational Joint Task Force to pursue their coordinated military efforts to combat the two branches of this terrorist group. Reconciliation must begin, and we urge States to initiate political processes aimed at encouraging combatants to surrender by establishing a clear legal framework and reintegration programmes. The only way to succeed, therefore, is to take an approach that combines all the tools available to the United Nations in the service of a comprehensive strategy that is fully aligned with the reform of the Organization that the Secretary-General is working on.

I would like to conclude by reminding the Council once again that the Lake Chad region has not always received the attention it deserves from the international community. The Council's visit to the region in March

enabled us to begin to redress that mistake and initiate a new dynamic in that regard. It is important that this issue remain a priority in the long term for both the Council and the international community, and France pledges its support in this respect.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Ms. Imam for their briefings.

China has been closely following developments in the Lake Chad basin and appreciates the firm commitment shown and the unremitting efforts made by the countries of the region in the fight against terrorism. China welcomes the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and its positive progress in the joint operations against terrorism.

At present, the Lake Chad basin region is plagued by terrorist and violent extremist activities and the threats posed by transnational organized crimes, including trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings, and the security situation there remains precarious. Meanwhile, the countries of the region face the grave challenges posed by the humanitarian crisis, with massive displacement of civilians in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including food and medicine. The United Nations and the international community must closely follow developments in the Lake Chad basin and jointly help the countries of the region to respond to the current challenges.

First, effective measures must be taken to ease the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad basin. The countries of the region and subregion and their peoples have hosted large numbers of internally displaced persons, and the international community should lend a helping hand. China has promptly responded to the crisis through bilateral and multilateral channels, providing emergency food assistance to the countries of the region, including Nigeria and Chad. We call on the international donors to honour their humanitarian assistance commitments as soon as possible and to continue to provide the countries of the region with massive assistance in terms of improving food security and medical care.

Secondly, support should be given to the countries of the region in their efforts to fight terrorism. Counter-terrorism in Africa is an important component of the international counter-terrorism struggle and has made a significant contribution thereto. The international community should support African countries in seeking African solutions to African problems, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries of the region, helping them to enhance their counter-terrorism capacity and providing them with assistance in the areas of funding, equipment and technology training support so as to support the MNJTF in carrying out effective operations.

Thirdly, we should take a longer-term perspective on this problem and focus on providing assistance to the countries of the region in upgrading their capacities in the area of economic and social development. The United Nations should scale up its contribution to post-conflict reconstruction and economic development and effectively improve living standards, thereby eliminating the breeding ground for conflict and terrorism.

We hope that the countries of the region will strengthen their coordination with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission and jointly respond to the challenges.

The international community should better align the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the African Agenda 2063 so as to achieve lasting peace and development as early as possible in Africa.

China has maintained close political and economic relations with the Lake Chad basin countries, actively providing assistance in their economic and social development. China will continue to pursue an Africa policy based on sincerity, practicality, affinity, good faith, justice and shared interests, fully implementing all of the outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

China stands ready to work with the international community and the countries of the region to support Central and West African countries in achieving lasting peace and common prosperity and to make a new contribution to peace and development in Africa.

Mr. Ilnytskyi (Ukraine): I should like to join other speakers in expressing our gratitude to all of today's briefers for their important inputs into our discussion.

In March, the Security Council, following its visit to the Lake Chad basin, adopted resolution 2349 (2017), which was a timely and dedicated instrument for responding to the complex crisis in the region.

The Lake Chad Basin region continues to endure a dire humanitarian and security situation. Extreme poverty, severe food insecurity, weak governance, climate change and the destructive activities of Boko Haram all contribute to this disastrous state of affairs.

Boko Haram continues to pose a threat to the civilian population in the region. Like a drowning man grasping at a straw, terrorists resort to the use of all available means, including suicide attacks. This only proves that they are losing their combat capacity. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and other actors that are fighting this terrorist group. But the countries of the region need additional support from the international community to prevail in this fight once and for all.

The United Nations and other relevant partners should continue their efforts in helping the Force prevent and address violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of their military operations. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the relevant United Nations entities that are working closely in the region towards the establishment of a human rights due diligence policy framework.

Without such an instrument, the countries of the Lake Chad basin will face additional obstacles with regard to the deradicalization and reintegration of former Boko Haram combatants, as well as to reconciliation.

To ensure lasting peace in the areas liberated from Boko Haram, the Governments of the Lake Chad basin region need to rebuild critical infrastructure, restore a State presence and grant unimpeded access to humanitarian actors. The absence of governmental involvement in these areas would mean that people would continue to be compelled to leave their homes and seek support and assistance in neighbouring countries or, much worse, join the ranks of terrorists.

Another question that requires our attention is the need for the Lake Chad basin countries to ensure the full implementation of their commitments in the area of the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs). We are concerned by the news that some countries continue to undertake forced returns of IDPs. Refugees should return to their homes only voluntarily, once they are sure that it is safe to leave the camps. If not, we are risking the creation of frequent back-and-forth movements across the borders and other areas of the region.

At the same time, we are encouraged by the efforts of the Lake Chad basin Governments in responding to the needs of the peoples affected, including those in Nigeria. It is paramount that the region and the international community be able to provide the urgently needed support to the 10.7 million people across the Lake Chad basin.

Last but not least, in resolution 2349 (2017) the Council recognized the adverse effects of climate change and ecological challenges among other factors affecting the stability of the region, and emphasized the need for adequate risk assessments and risk-management strategies by the Governments of the region and the United Nations. The issue of climate change was also dealt with by the Council at the Arria-Formula meeting on the security implications of climate change, which was organized by Ukraine in April.

In this regard, we look forward to seeing this problematic issue discussed in the upcoming reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lake Chad basin region.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing. I thank also Ms. Fatima Shehu Imam for joining us; it is good to hear from her. It was very good to have met her on the Council's trip earlier this year to Maiduguri, and I thank her for the important work she does in north-east Nigeria. The contributions of civil society are so very critical.

The Lake Chad Basin is one of Africa's most pressing challenges. For years the United States has strongly supported efforts to eradicate the terror perpetrated by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), and this fight is far from over. But all of us in the Security Council must recognize that a military solution alone will not bring sustainable peace to the Lake Chad basin.

Although the counter-terrorism mission is vital, we also need to support the stabilization and development of liberated areas and demand respect for human rights and accountability for human rights abuses and violations for all perpetrators. That is why, following the Council's trip to the region, we adopted resolution 2359 (2017) and its mandate for the Secretary-General to regularly report on the situation in the Lake Chad basin so that the Council can respond to the grave circumstances faced by so many in the region.

This first report (S/2017/764) is an important step in that regard, and we are committed to ensuring that the region remains on the Council's agenda. Discussing the situation in the Lake Chad basin in the Security Council should not be at all controversial. Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) are clear and present threats to international peace and security. We have seen unspeakable human rights abuses committed in the Lake Chad basin. The region is on the brink of famine, and we still do not have unfettered humanitarian access to those in need. It is therefore long past time for the Council to step up its involvement. Boko Haram persists in its brutal tactics and human rights abuses.

The United States is deeply troubled by the increase in attacks and deaths that we have observed at the hands of Boko Haram and ISIS since the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) earlier this year. In June and July alone, according to the United Nations, 60 female suicide bombers have launched attacks across Borno state. Hundreds of civilians have been killed this year. There is a long way to go to defeat Boko Haram and ISIS in the Lake Chad basin, and that is why the United States is deeply committed to its partnerships across the region to eradicate those groups and to stop the senseless violence.

As we discovered during the Council's trip in March in the course of our meetings with women and girls in Maroua, Cameroon, and Maiduguri, Nigeria, that conflict, like so many others, has a disproportionate impact on women and girls — a point that Ms. Imam just underscored for us. The fact that Boko Haram increasingly relies on young girls to commit suicide attacks is the clearest example. We were so struck by that terrible reality during our trip. Just as those girls lives where beginning, they were abused and brainwashed to commit the most unspeakable of acts, thereby cutting short their all-too-brief lives and those of the innocent victims around them.

There is no question that Boko Haram and ISIS must be destroyed, but success against those groups requires more than a simple show of force. The most successful counter-terrorism campaigns are those that adhere to international humanitarian law, respect the human rights of all citizens and hold violators of human rights accountable. We therefore remain troubled by reports of regional security forces using inhumane and brutal tactics or failing to distinguish terrorist combatants from civilians. Failing to uphold and protect human rights or hold security forces accountable only serves to boost the recruitment efforts of the very terrorists whom we seek to eradicate. Regional Governments must ensure that their security forces protect civilians and uphold their fundamental human rights. There must be a better way to both investigate and prevent those and other abuses from happening.

We were concerned to read in the Secretary-General's report about the delayed opening of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Chad to enhance regional monitoring and reporting. We believe that the Council should consider mandating a formal OHCHR mission to visit the region to report first-hand on abuses by all parties. But the challenges in this conflict do not end when areas are liberated from Boko Haram and ISIS. In those areas, local authorities need to quickly restore the basics: the rule of law, respect for human rights and basic services. That is how we can all ensure that groups like Boko Haram and ISIS do not return. Such efforts to restore local governance deserve strong international support. Governments in the Lake Chad basin also need to establish the conditions for millions of internally displaced persons and Nigerian refugees to voluntarily return to their homes in safety and dignity.

We echo the Secretary-General's call on Nigeria and Cameroon to work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to achieve the full implementation of the tripartite agreement to ensure no forced returns of refugees, and call upon all other Governments to avoid any involuntary or unsafe returns of those displaced. The United States remains committed to supporting the Governments of the Lake Chad basin in meeting those very difficult challenges. We have contributed over $640 million to the international humanitarian response in the Lake Chad basin since October 2015, of which more than two-thirds was provided this past year alone.

Many other countries have stepped up to provide assistance to the region, including the Niger's $4.4 million-dollar contribution to its own national appeal. We commend those pledges, but more must be done. We would therefore urge all Member States to examine ways in which they can support counter-terrorism, the humanitarian response in all the affected countries, economic development, human rights and stabilization in the region.

The United States will continue supporting regional leadership and the people of the Lake Chad basin in their arduous efforts to rid the region of Boko Haram and ISIS and establish stability, good governance and prosperity. We urge our fellow Council members and the entire United Nations system to continue focusing our collective attention and efforts on the region and its challenges.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his informative briefing and welcome Director Imam to our deliberations.

The visit of members of the Security Council to the countries of the Lake Chad basin enabled us to learn more about the Multinational Joint Task Force, as well as the humanitarian situation. That will help in devising a future comprehensive strategy focused on addressing the root causes and the socioeconomic dimension of the crisis. The measures of the Multinational Joint Task Force and the national armies of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria have resulted successfully in combating Boko Haram. Notwithstanding those gains, much needs to be accomplished. To fight Boko Haram, we have to robustly strengthen the framework of integrated assistance for countering terrorism for the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Resolving the humanitarian situation requires the resettlement of displaced people and refugees and immediately addressing the level of critical food insecurity. Returning to villages of origin is vital to beginning a new life and restarting agriculture to avert a potential famine.

Access to areas remains a challenge, despite efforts to overcome them, and therefore the establishment of humanitarian assistance in Nigeria and other measures should be supported. It will also be essential to implement the tripartite agreement between Cameroon, Nigeria and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to manage the voluntary return of refugees across the countries' borders.

Care for the half-million children suffering from severe, acute malnutrition and disease should be administered in the light of destroyed health facilities. The detention of children must be stopped during counter-terrorism responses, with the prohibition of the use of schools and hospitals for military purposes. Furthermore, the abduction of and violence directed against women and girls by Boko Haram, as well as the responses of security forces and vigilante groups in counter-terrorism operations, demand global attention.

Headquarters, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN-Women, must continue to advocate with the Governments and the Multinational Joint Task Force to advance a strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. That could be facilitated by recruiting dedicated gender advisers at all phases of the peace and development process.

The complex plight of people living in affected areas continues to impede the recovery in progress. In that regard, implementing the tripartite convention to strengthen judicial cooperation signed by Chad, Mali and the Niger would offer them better legal protection.

The trip to the Lake Chad basin region vividly demonstrated that we need to strengthen the role of the United Nations system, in close consultation with national authorities within the context of the United Nations development assistance framework so that the United Nations delivers as one. The coordinated activity of all United Nations agencies and programmes across the board will help deliver assistance in an effective, economically rational and transparent manner. Moreover, investments are essential to reducing poverty, providing education, health care and social services, and encouraging opportunities, which would considerably improve the socioeconomic situation.

We are convinced that long-term stability and sustainable peace can be achieved only through the nexus linking peace, security and development. Above all, the recent two visits by members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to Africa, respectively, have amply demonstrated the need to promote a regional approach, which is the only way forward. Threats to the region, such as terrorism, environmental degradation and underdevelopment, cannot be successfully addressed in one country alone. They are interregional in nature and must be addressed accordingly.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for the information he provided to us in connection with the first report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lake Chad basin region (S/2017/764). We also thank Ms. Fatima Shehu Imam for the statement she delivered to the Council today.

Bolivia expresses its concern over the ongoing threat posed by Boko Haram to the Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. The terrible attacks perpetrated by the group against the civilian population — murders, kidnappings, the use of girls as suicide bombers, sexual violence against women, the recruitment of children — all clearly show the urgent need for the international community to join forces in countering the extreme violence of Boko Haram. As a result, the region faces a devastating humanitarian situation. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, 10.7 million people need humanitarian assistance. This is an alarming number that must force us to sit up and take note and compel us to undertake efforts that will allow the Governments of the Lake Chad basin to move forward.

In the short term, we are focusing on the fight against food insecurity and the basic needs of internally displaced persons, refugees and the most vulnerable people and, in cases of return, ensuring that their return be voluntary, safe and dignified. We echo the appeal made by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the necessary funds to be earmarked and for assistance to be provided to the people in need.

Recalling the message conveyed by the Deputy Secretary-General to the Council at our meeting of 10 August (see S/PV.8022), we must pay special attention and respond to the impact that this conflict has on women in the region. While sexual violence in conflict does not distinguish based on gender, it primarily affects affect women and girls. They are victims of violence, rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced marriages, forced sterilization and other forms of violence, in addition to stigmatization when they return to their communities. All of this is the result of Boko Haram's violent extremism.

In this regard, the empowerment of women in the fight against that terrorist group is crucial. The full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution processes must be ensured in the strategies that are being executed. It is therefore fundamental to ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions related to women and peace and security, especially resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2242 (2015).

We express our concern about the effects of climate change on the Lake Chad basin, such as water scarcity, desertification, drought, among others, all of which increase the instability of the region. We must develop strategies that address these risks as they largely affect socioeconomic development and food insecurity. In view of this terrible situation, we must acknowledge and commend the work of the Governments of the Lake Chad Basin Commission — Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria — in the fight against terrorism. Thanks to the committed and coordinated work of these four countries, significant progress has been made in reducing Boko Haram's capacity.

In that respect, we welcome the Commission's initiative to hold the first regional conference in October, which will allow us to define mechanisms to tackle the region's crisis, in addition to dealing with the root causes of the conflict. We are confident that the leadership of these countries will allow us to establish a regional strategy that will address these root causes, as that is one of the main shortcomings that we are currently facing. In that connection, we should also consider developing a regional strategy to address disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of former members of Boko Haram.

The participation of regional organizations in these efforts is also essential. The African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Economic Community of Central African States have assisted in the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force, which has considerably reduced the capacity of Boko Haram in recent years. In this regard, we call on donors and the international community to honour their pledges, to cooperate with countries in the region and to strengthen their governance and State institutions, as well as to contribute to the efforts of the subregion and the Multinational Joint Task Force in the fight against terrorism, as stated in resolution 2349 (2017). Boko Haram is not only a threat to the Lake Chad basin region, it is also a threat to the international community as a whole.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Ms. Imam for their briefings.

Boko Haram represents an ongoing threat to the Lake Chad basin, with devastating near-term humanitarian impacts and long-term socioeconomic effects. We are encouraged by the efforts of the countries in the region, including gains made through the Multinational Joint Task Force during the reporting period. However, much more needs to be done to implement resolution 2349

(2017) and stabilize the region. Allow me to highlight a few areas that need particular attention.

More than anything else, there are massive and immediate humanitarian needs. The large-scale food insecurity and nutritional emergency requires not only more aid, but also delivery and access. There is a commendable effort under way to strengthen civil-military cooperation among humanitarian actors, the Multinational Joint Task Force and national security services. We encourage these actors to share information and best practices. We also call for full implementation of the tripartite agreement between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Cameroon and Nigeria, which is essential for the safe and dignified return of refugees. Japan is actively considering additional humanitarian assistance to counter food insecurity and nutritional emergency.

In addition to the immediate humanitarian response to the crisis, long-term investment in socioeconomic development is required for early recovery. Following the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region in February, the first senior officials meeting of the Oslo Consultative Group last week expanded the focus to long-term stability and development, including through enhanced institutions. Our efforts must build on this growing global attention to ensure that the United Nations technical expertise in development and peacebuilding is deployed coherently and effectively across the Lake Chad basin.

Both the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council have visited the field individually. These missions led to a shared awareness of the challenges facing the Lake Chad basin and of the need to do more. It has become clear that the deterioration of the economy raises the risk of terrorist recruitment. Local calls for job creation, education and vocational training for youth are common throughout the region. The long-term impact of climate change on the socioeconomic stability of the region and community also needs to be examined. The importance of enhancing community resilience to violent extremism by addressing the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency cannot be overemphasized.

I would also like to draw attention to the disproportionate impact of sexual and gender-based violence on women and girls in the region by Boko Haram, as well as other actors. Female internally displaced persons are also most vulnerable during a humanitarian crisis and a gender-responsive approach is a must.

All actors must integrate gender analysis into their substantive work, including by adopting a gender-specific approach for the protection and empowerment of women and girls victimized by or formerly associated with Boko Haram. As a recent example of efforts to implement resolution 2349 (2017), Japan has funded a subregional workshop, hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in Yaoundé in July, to better integrate a gender perspective into criminal justice responses to terrorism. This workshop supported multisectoral efforts by four countries, as well as the African Union (AU) to strengthen the criminal justice response while ensuring that women's rights are respected.

In a similar vein, we commend the recent United Nations-AU joint mission to Nigeria under the Deputy Secretary-General to support efforts to advance peace through women's well-being and empowerment. Empowering women and promoting their active role is essential to rebuilding society and strengthening community resilience against terrorism and violent extremism.

Japan strongly supports the United Nations regional approaches to the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel. We also encourage UNOWAS and UNOCA to focus sustained attention on and follow up to resolution 2349 (2017) in that regard. Japan looks forward to working together with international and regional partners to secure a better future for the region.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Feltman, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Terrorism remains the main threat facing the entire world, and the African continent in particular. The increased activity of militants of the terrorist group Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria and north-western Cameroon is of great concern. Attacks on civilians, refugee camps and humanitarian convoys have become more frequent. Terrorists are not afraid to use women and children as suicide bombers. By some estimates, over the past six months there have been several hundred victims.

We strongly condemn the criminal ideology and practices of Boko Haram. We should abandon the harmful classification of the fight against Boko Haram as a conflict. That organization is classified as a terrorist entity by the Security Council. The fight against it is therefore a counter-terrorist operation. Attempts to represent terrorists as one of the parties to a conflict only serves to create the illusion that punishment for their crimes can be avoided.

We are convinced of the importance of coordinated action by Africans, including its subregional organizations, in the fight against terrorism. We note the relevant efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Multinational Joint Task Force, formed by Cameroon, the Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Benin. We welcome the results achieved to date.

Fundamental advances in counter-terrorism activities are hampered by the close link between terrorists and various criminal groups, pirates and smugglers. Bandits exploit gaps in national and cross-border security to engage in their illicit activity. As a result, the region is witnessing a flourishing trade in drugs and arms and uncontrolled and illegal migration. One cannot but be alarmed by the fact that in profiting from the chaos and suffering of the population, criminal elements provide material support to terrorists.

Despite the priority of the counter-terrorism element, the situation in the region cannot be rectified by force alone. To achieve sustainable political stabilization, it is necessary to work to address the root causes that have led to the deterioration of the situation and the creation of Boko Haram. Terrorists and extremists of every kind must be deprived of fuel to grow. It is important to resolve acute social and economic problems and to strengthen the institutions of State authority in that part of the African continent.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Lake Chad basin (S/2017/764), the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. Resources that national Governments could allocate to alleviating the suffering of the population are being redirected to fight Boko Haram. A vicious cycle has therefore been created; people cannot be fed until terrorism is defeated, but terrorism cannot be defeated so long as extremist groups thrive on a despairing and desolate population.

In that regard, we support a decisive and adequate response on the part of the international community to the threats and challenges faced by the countries of the Lake Chad basin. It is important to ensure the coherence of approaches to assisting countries of the region. At the same time, outside support should not be turned into the imposition of ready-made formulas that are alien to African states. The international role must be supported by the coordinating role of the United Nations, in close coordination with African structures and individual African States.

We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to develop a comprehensive strategy for the region. We believe that it should serve as a consolidating and cementing element for external support for the region. In our view, it is important to take into account the experience garnered from the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the real impact of which has yet to be seen.

For our part, we stand ready to continue to support African States in addressing the problems facing them in the context of the fight against Boko Haram and in helping refugees and the victims of natural disasters. We will continue to provide humanitarian and other assistance, both bilaterally and through international organizations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ethiopia.

At the outset, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his comprehensive briefing on the security, humanitarian, human rights and social and economic situations in the Lake Chad basin. We also thank Ms. Fatima Imam for joining us via teleconference from Maiduguri, Nigeria.

We welcome the first six-month report of the Secretary-General on the Lake Chad basin (S/2017/764), pursuant to resolution 2349 (2017). In that regard, we take note of the progress that countries of the region have made in the fight against Boko Haram, and we commend the crucial role played by the Multinational Joint Task Force. However, it is only by addressing the root causes of the conflict in the subregion, including challenges resulting from climate change, under-development and unemployment, among other things, that long-term solutions to the crises in the region can be found.

That was indeed strongly underscored during the discussion we had with the African Union Peace and Security Council in Addis Ababa on the situation of

the Lake Chad basin. We welcome the plan by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the African Union to organize the first regional conference in N'Djamena next month, with a view to developing a regional strategy. The regional dimension of the security threats in the subregion and their cross-cutting nature no doubt require an integrated approach, and the initiative of the LCBC and the African Union is a step in the right direction.

In spite of the progress seen in scaling up international support, the increasing humanitarian needs in the Lake Chad basin require continued mobilization and support. The plight of refugees and internally displaced persons is a matter of particular concern. We hope that the United Nations and the international community will redouble efforts in that regard.

I will conclude by underlining the importance of further coordination of the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union, as well as their respective regional mechanisms, to meet the needs of the countries of the Lake Chad basin. Developing a regional strategy to address the root causes of the crises, encouraging international support for the Multinational Joint Task Force and urging donors to fulfil pledges for humanitarian needs are some of the priorities before the Council. We hope to see progress along those lines over the coming six months.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Haidara (Nigeria): I wish to thank the Ethiopian presidency and the membership of the Security Council for organizing this briefing. It is illustrative of the positive disposition of members of the Security Council towards resolving the myriad challenges of the Lake Chad Basin region. Our special appreciation goes to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/764), which contains far-reaching recommendations. We also commend Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his insight on the situation in the region and we note the perspectives shared by Fatima Shehu Imam.

The Boko Haram insurgency has negatively impacted virtually every facet of human endeavour, including the economy, the polity, and the lives and livelihoods of people not only in the north-east of Nigeria, but across the region.

The insurgency has been met with resolve and resilience of the Nigerian people and Government. The Multinational Joint Task Force has had great success in weakening Boko Haram. We have continued to witness the emergence of rescued survivors and victims, hitherto under the brutal oppression of Boko Haram in the north-east. Communities have pulled together to provide succour.

For its part, the Nigerian Government has made significant progress in the fight against Boko Haram. The Nigerian military has successfully taken over the Sambisa forest and its environs. In that success story, we acknowledge the critical support of our neighbouring countries, namely, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Benin. That progress notwithstanding, the Nigerian Government is aware of other development challenges in the region, including the shrinking of Lake Chad. Averting that consequence will require dedicated international intervention to recharge the lake.

As we celebrate our gains in the war against Boko Haram, we are not oblivious of the humanitarian challenges resulting from the massive displacement of persons, the abandoned farmlands and the disruption of the educational system, among others. In that regard, the Government of Nigeria has embarked on programmes to support the reintegration of victims into their communities.

I am glad to report that the Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative has been mandated to coordinate and provide synergy, leadership and direction for the various initiatives to help bring normalcy to the region. That encompasses Government, development partners, private foundations and civil society. We are also accelerating the implementation of existing legal and institutional frameworks to alleviate the suffering of our people, in the spirit of the Istanbul World Humanitarian Summit of May 2016.

We acknowledge and welcome the critical support provided by the United Nations agencies to the girls released by Boko Haram. For its part, the Nigerian Government has continued to provide food, integrated healthcare, shelter, psychosocial support and access to water and sanitation amenities for those in need. We are also engaging highly respected community and religious leaders to discourage vulnerable youth from being radicalized. We continue to accord the highest premium to increasing the resilience of internally

displaced persons through vocational training and skills acquisition programmes.

We hope that at this critical juncture, when there is an improvement in the security situation as a result of the recent military gains, the Security Council and the international community will continue to engage the Governments in the region in the search for lasting peace, security, protection of civilians and resolution of the humanitarian situation caused by the activities of Boko Haram.

May I seize this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of Nigeria to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, in recognition of the primary responsibility of States to protect civilians within their national jurisdiction. This conviction underlines our Government's resolve to take all measures necessary to protect civilians in the battle against the terrorist group Boko Haram and its ilk. All such measures are being taken within a framework designed to simultaneously address the short- and medium-term development needs of the region.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the future of the people of the Lake Chad basin region rests on durable security and the sustainability of resources around the lake. We are confident that by enhancing collaboration and consolidating strong partnerships through the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union, we will swiftly overcome the challenge. The upcoming N'Djamena meeting is a consolidation of such efforts.

We renew the call for rededicated international action, increased global attention and active engagement with countries of the Lake Chad basin region to accelerate the recovery efforts and to address the root causes of terrorism.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.